

Parting shot

Images from the somewhat abstract underwater world often lack a sense of scale or size, and as underwater photographers another diver in the frames gives our images an instantly recognisable feature, but what if you find yourself without a buddy or model?

In December 2004 I was diving Te Waikoropupu Springs, in New Zealand. Diving the spring exceeded my wildest expectations, with fantastic visibility and amazing colours, but with no other divers at the site I felt that the images I had taken lacked the sense of scale. To get a diver in the frame would need some creative thinking.

I may have lacked an underwater model but I had one valuable asset - a topside assistant. Perhaps I should qualify the use of the word "assistant".... My assistant in this case was my nine-year-old daughter, Emily. Emily would take an underwater picture, with me as the model!

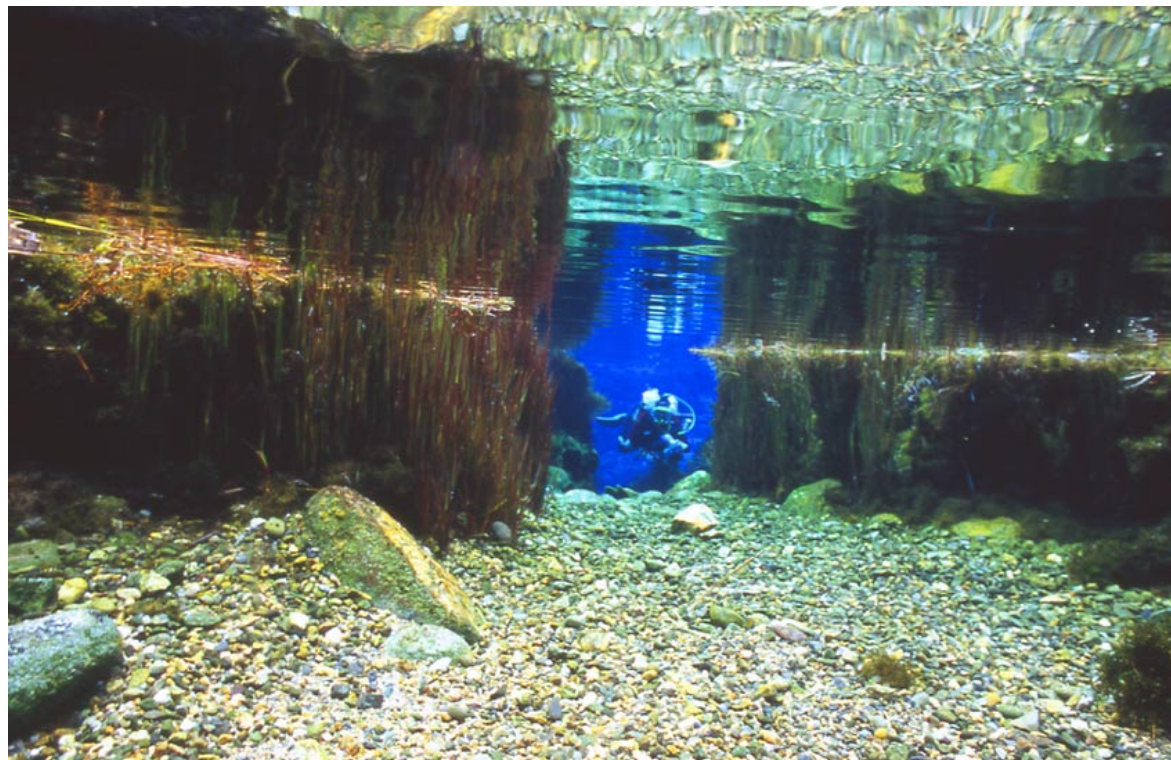
There is a small entrance to the spring, giving divers access to the main vent through the reeds. This was the only access to the water's edge, and as I finned through it I noticed the reeds formed a natural frame to the intense blue of the main spring. The water was so clear that the far side

of the spring - around 40 metres away - was visible at this distance. This was the only spot where a self portrait was possible, and it would need more than a bit of setting up and assistant briefing.

I preset my Nikonos V and 15mm lens at F5.6 and Aperture priority was chosen to cope with the fluctuating light levels. Film stock was Fuji Velvia 100F.

Taking care of the camera settings was the easy part. Asking Emily to kneel at the edge of the spring, lower the camera to arms length, keep the camera body level with the surface of the spring, and take five or six frames just as I reached the edge of the reeds was - on the face of it - asking a lot of a nine-year-old. With mediocre expectations I entered the spring. As I returned I half expected to see Emily sitting on the bank having forgotten all about my picture, but right on cue a Nikonos descended into the water, finger on the shutter release. As I de-kitted I was confronted by Emily, who announced "The camera would only take one picture". I had forgotten to tell her to advance the film after every shot.....

Considering all the variables at



work here I was not expecting such a rewarding image. Nine-year-olds are not renowned for their concentration skills or doing anything an adult asks of them but Emily excelled on this occasion.

This image is exactly as I saw it in my mind's eye. To achieve that in one frame makes it all the more rewarding.

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Do you have a nice shot with a short story behind it?

If so e mail me and yours could be the next "Parting shot".

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